COMIC BOOK LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

DEFENDER

FIGHTING CENSORSHIP TO THE MAX!

issue six
summer 2016

Director's Note

We're halfway through 2016, and CBLDF just completed a move all the way across the country, from New York City to Portland, Oregon. But that hasn't stopped censors — while packing boxes, we've continued to defend comics and other books from limited worldviews that would silence them. As you can see in this issue of *CBLDF Defender*, we also kicked off a major education project in the process.

It turns out state and federal governments are no fan of comics and related properties. On page 3, we examine Utah's attempts to censor a movie theater for serving alcohol during showings of *Deadpool* and the U.S. State Department's volley against Japanese manga and anime. The latest censorship news on pages 4 and 5 examines a Minnesota school district's attack on *This One Summer*, the obscenity charges against a Japanese cartoonist, and more.

Also in this issue, we have a sneak peak of *She Changed Comics*, CBLDF's new educational resource that tells the story of the women who changed free expression in comics. A runaway success on Kickstarter, we were able to meet several stretch goals that will help us build a comprehensive education program around the book, and we're partnering with Image Comics for its October release. Learn more on page 6.

Speaking of women who changed free expression in comics, CBLDF contributor Casey Gilly sat down with Noelle Stevenson, the creator behind the groundbreaking *Nimona* webcomics and graphic novel and one of the creators of the popular *Lumberjanes* series. Stevenson shares her thoughts on comics, fandom, the importance of diversity in the medium, and the future of women in comics. Check out the interview on page 8.

In late April and early May, two Iranian cartoonists were released from prison: Hadi Heidari and Atena Farghadani. Both had been jailed for their work. We've been following their stories closely, and Maren Williams shares more on their release on page 11.

Finally, it's summertime, and that means it's time to read comics. Check out CBLDF's "10 Banned Comics for Summer Reading" on page 12.

We're settling in to our new office in Portland, but the fight goes on. We hope you'll join us in defending free expression and the battle against censorship.

—Charles Brownstein, Executive Director

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UTAH V. FUN

It's the State of Utah versus Deadpool, beer, and a movie theater in a fight for the First Amendment...

"The statutory regulation does not violate the First Amendment." So claims the state of Utah in response to the lawsuit that Brewvies, a movie theater in Salt Lake City, has brought against the Utah Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control for trying to enforce the state's antiquated Alcoholic Beverage Control Act over showings of *Deadpool*.

The law prohibits the serving of alcohol during the exhibition of simulated sex acts. Undercover agents of the DABC discovered the offense by visiting the theater, buying beers, and observing that *Deadpool*, which is rated R and does have a few sex scenes, had not been censored to make such a viewing compliant with Utah's draconian law.

Brewvies had already been the target of this absurd law on multiple occasions. In 2011, the theater was fined $1,627 for a similar "offense" during showings of *Hangover Part II*, and DABC threatened the theater over showings of *Magic Mike XXL* and *Ted 2*. In the case of *Deadpool*, DABC tried to fine Brewvies and threatened to revoke the theater's liquor license. So, Brewvies took DABC to court to assert their First Amendment rights. "This isn't only about Brewvies' First Amendment rights," Brewvies lawyer Rocky Anderson told CBS affiliate KUTV. "This is about the First Amendment rights of Brewvies customers, who obviously want to see these movies. Whether alcohol is involved or not, the First Amendment applies. Period."

The state backed off enforcing the law (for now), but they filed a response to the lawsuit, denying that the Alcoholic Beverage Control Act violates the First Amendment and claiming that the "regulation is within the constitutional power of the government" and "the State has the authority to protect the public health, welfare and morals of the community." The state further claims they aren't interested in suppressing free speech and that any impact on expressive content is incidental, so they are not in violation of constitutional law. How showing *Deadpool* to a willing audience while serving alcohol constitutes a threat to the "public health, welfare, and morals" of the Salt Lake City community isn't outlined in the response.

Anderson noted that the law "is generally used to regulate alcohol at strip clubs." Brewvies is fighting to have the law as it relates to film screenings like *Deadpool* repealed. "That's what's given the DABC the notion that they can go around and censor and punish people for what otherwise is First Amendment protected," Anderson told *The Washington Times*.

The state of Utah asked that the case "be dismissed, with prejudice, that [Brewvies] take nothing thereby, and that [the state of Utah] be awarded costs and fees reasonably incurred in defending this action and such other relief as the Court deems just."

To support their First Amendment fight, Brewvies has turned to an online fundraising campaign), which has raised around $23,000 as of this writing, including $5,000 from *Deadpool* star Ryan Reynolds.

U.S. State Department No Fan of Manga and Anime

In a recent report, the U.S. Department of State joined the United Nations in suggesting that Japan should restrict certain types of manga and anime, condemning what it calls "unfettered availability of sexually explicit cartoons, comics, and video games, some of which depicted scenes of violent sexual abuse and the rape of children." Alongside some very legitimate areas of concern regarding sexual exploitation of actual human minors in Japan, a State Department report cites unidentified "experts" who said that children are harmed by "a culture that appears to accept the depiction of child sexual abuse" in manga and anime.

The State Department country reports have been produced since 1976 and are submitted to Congress for the purpose of monitoring human rights around the world. The recently released 2015 report removed a clause that had been present in previous editions, noting that Japan's National Police Agency "continued to maintain that no link was established between… animated images and child victimization." Manga and anime were first mentioned in the 2007 report on Japan, which claimed that "child molesters used cartoons and comics depicting child pornography to seduce children." The mention vanished in the 2008 report, but returned in 2009 with the acknowledgment that NPA denied there was any link between manga or anime and actual sexual abuse.

This One Summer Restricted in Minnesota School

The school board in Henning, Minnesota, voted 4–2 to overturn an administrative decision that had banned Jillian and Mariko Tamaki's graphic novel *This One Summer* from district library shelves. Unfortunately, the decision is not a complete win. The book must be shelved separately from those for younger readers and students in grades 10–12 must have signed parental permission to read it.

In May, the critically-acclaimed book was banned from Henning's single K–12 school after one parent complained of sexual references and profanity. CBLDF led the Kids' Right to Read Project in urging the school district to restore *This One Summer* to library shelves. Currently, the school uses an informal procedure whereby any complaints go directly to the principal, who makes a final decision without a chance for review by the school board or the public. The letter also urged the district to draft an objective policy for handling challenges to library materials.

This One Summer received Caldecott and Printz Honors from the American Library Association, as well as starred reviews in multiple industry sources. Publisher First Second recommends *This One Summer* for ages 12 and up, a range that surely encompasses a good portion of students at the school.

Superintendent Jeremy Olson has described the book as

"pervasively vulgar," language that originates in the landmark school censorship case *Board of Education, Island Trees Union Free School District No. 26 v. Pico*. In that decision, the Supreme Court found that schools could be justified in restricting or removing books from libraries only if the books are "pervasively vulgar," an undefined standard that in any case does not describe *This One Summer*. The letter explains:

> *There is no basis to conclude that a book is pervasively vulgar simply because it contains a number of instances of profanity. The book is part of the collections of school libraries across the United States. It has been challenged occasionally, but, as far as we are aware, has been consistently kept in those collections.*

While the school board's compromise is certainly an improvement on an outright ban, the requirement for high school students to have written parental permission is a needless encumbrance on their First Amendment rights. Additionally, it remains to be seen whether the Henning School District will implement a policy for objectively handling future challenges to library materials.

CENSORSHIP SCORECARD

CBLDF joins coalition efforts to protect the freedom to read comics. Taking an active stand against all instances of censorship curbs precedent that could adversely affect the rights upon which comics readers depend. Here are a few of our latest cases...

Pasco County, Florida

WIN: A review committee in Pasco County, Florida, voted to ban Stephen Chbosky's *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* from a middle school after two parents complained about the book's references to sex, drugs, and drinking. Although the review committee included no high school representation, members had recommended that the book be banned at that level as well. Pasco superintendent Kurt Browning, who had previously defended a 2014 decision to remove John Green's *Paper Towns* from 8th grade summer reading lists, decided not to ban *Perks* district-wide.

Marion County, Kentucky

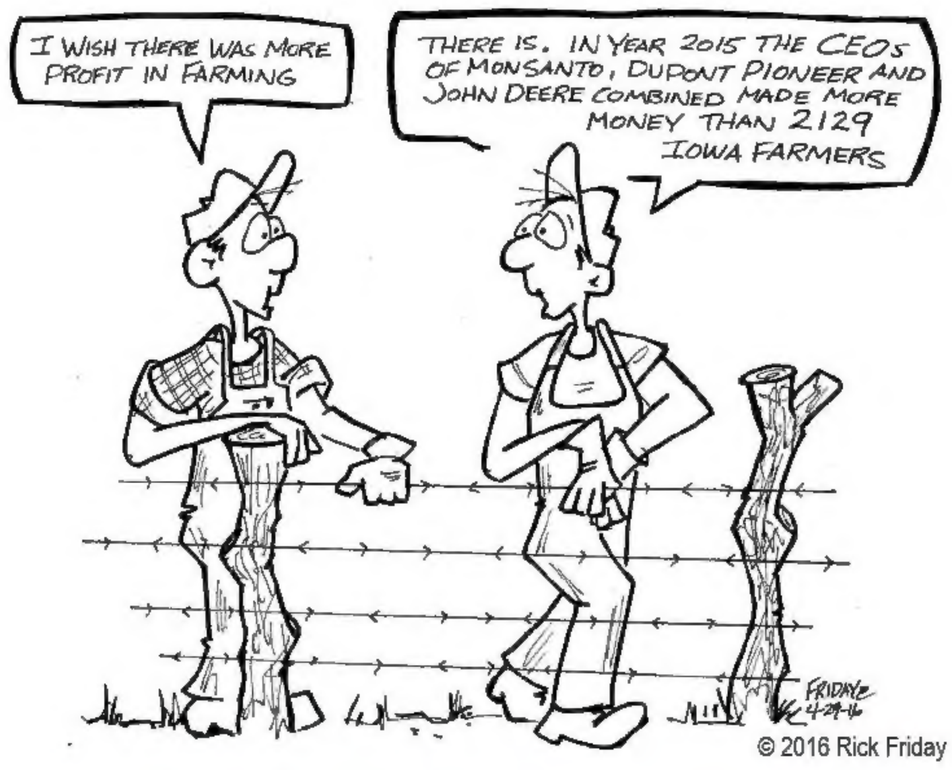
WIN: A district review committee in Marion County, Kentucky, voted to keep John Green's *Looking for Alaska* in the high school curriculum. The book had been challenged by a parent who also called 12th grade English teacher Emily Veatch "godless" and "shameful" in a letter to the editor of the local newspaper. CBLDF and other members of the Kids' Right to Read Project sent a letter of defense, warning the district of the constitutional issues at stake.

Northville, Michigan

WIN: The school board in Northville, Michigan, voted unanimously to keep Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* in the curriculum for AP English Literature and Composition. To accommodate concerned parents, the board also said students may choose an alternate reading assignment. Among the objections were worries that the book might inspire "deviant behavior" and contains "negative references… against the Christian faith." CBLDF and other members of KRRP sent the board a letter to urge members to base their decision on "sound educational grounds" rather than public objections.

Virginia

WIN: Virginia Governor Terry McAuliffe vetoed H.B. 516, a bill that would have required public schools to notify parents of "sexually explicit" content in curricular materials. The bill was silent on what content would be labeled "sexually explicit," or how that term would be defined. As such, it could apply to a great deal of classic and contemporary literature. After the bill passed through both houses of the Virginia General Assembly, CBLDF and other members of the National Coalition Against Censorship sent a letter urging McAuliffe to reject it. Although lawmakers could attempt an override of the veto, they are unlikely to succeed since it passed the Senate with only a small majority.


I WISH THERE WAS MORE PROFIT IN FARMING
THERE IS. IN YEAR 2015 THE CEOS OF MONSANTO, DUPONT PIONEER AND JOHN DEERE COMBINED MADE MORE MONEY THAN 2129 IOWA FARMERS
FRIDAY 4-29-16
© 2016 Rick Friday

Cartoonist Fired for Cartoon Criticizing Farm Industry CEOs

A complaint from an advertiser ended Rick Friday's 21-year stint drawing cartoons for the Iowa-based newspaper *Farm News*. Friday took to Facebook to comment:

> *Apparently a large company affiliated with one of the corporations mentioned in the cartoon was insulted and cancelled their advertisement with the paper, thus, resulting in the reprimand of my editor and cancellation of* It's Friday *cartoons after 21 years of service and over 1090 published cartoons to over 24,000 households per week in 33 counties of Iowa.*

Although the decision to print Friday's cartoons is ultimately up to the newspaper's editorial staff, their actions do raise concerns regarding free expression and the power large corporations can exert on speech, especially that of individuals and publications that don't have the means to fight attempts to control content. "When it comes to altering someone's opinion or someone's voice for the purpose of wealth, I have a problem with that," said Friday to CBS affiliate KCCI. "It's our constitutional right to free speech and our constitutional right to free press."

Japanese Cartoonist Fined for Distributing 3D Plans of Her Genitals Online

A Japanese court imposed a fine of 400,000 yen (about $3,667) on artist Megumi Igarashi for distributing 3D plans of her own genitals via the Internet. The plans were among the premiums in her crowdfunding campaign, which raised money to construct a full-size "vagina kayak." Judge Mihoko Tanabe said that the 3D-printing data had the potential to "sexually arouse viewers" and therefore could not legally be distributed online. Despite Japan's robust porn industry, the actual display of genitals for the purpose of sexual arousal is illegal.

Igarashi, who works under the pseudonym Rokudenashiko, or "good-for-nothing girl," was acquitted on a separate obscenity charge for displaying small plaster models of her vagina in a Tokyo sex shop. Because the models were not for sale and were brightly painted such that they "did not obviously resemble female genitalia," Tanabe ruled that they were art and not obscene. Igarashi's manga memoir of her experiences, *What Is Obscenity*, was released in North America the same week that the fine was imposed.

Find out more about these stories and get the latest news every day at www.cbldf.org!

CBLDF SECURES FIRST VICTORY AGAINST LOUISIANA'S ONLINE AGE-VERIFICATION LAW

CBLDF is among a group of booksellers, publishers, and free speech organizations who secured a preliminary injunction against a Louisiana law that requires websites to age-verify every Internet user before providing access to non-obscene material that could be deemed harmful to any minor.

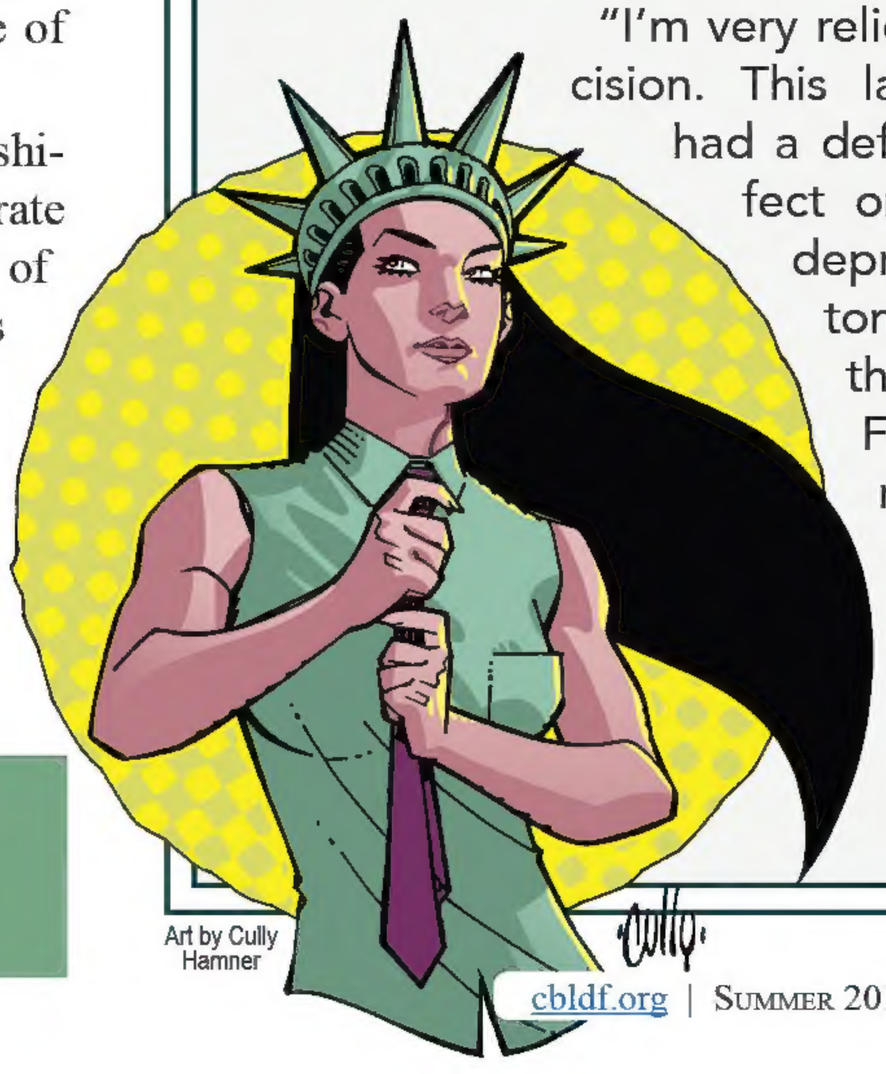
H.B. 153 requires that "any person or entity in Louisiana that publishes material harmful to minors on the Internet shall, prior to permitting access to the material, require any person attempting to access the material to electronically acknowledge and attest that the person seeking to access the material is eighteen years of age or older." A failure to age-verify, even if no minor ever tries to access the material, could lead to a $10,000 fine.

To comply with the law, booksellers and magazine publishers must place an age confirmation button in front of their entire website or attempt to review all of the books or magazines available via their website and place an age confirmation button in front of each item that might be inappropriate for any minor.

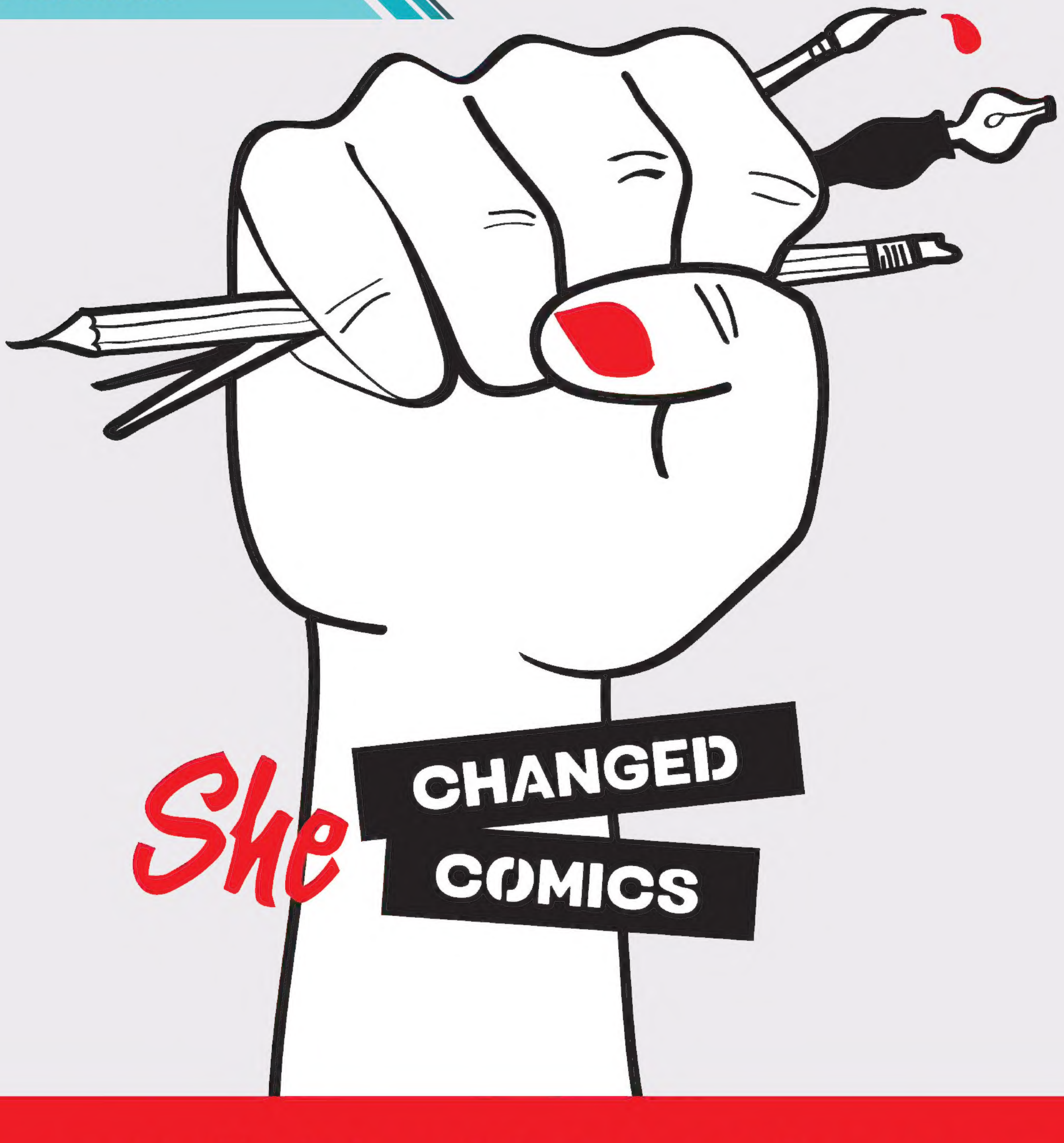
The law violates the First Amendment rights of older minors as well as adults. Courts have held that older minors have a right to purchase books that are not appropriate for younger minors. However, the Louisiana law bars anyone under 18 from accessing "harmful" material. If a retailer places an age verification page at the front of a website, it would effectively bar all minors from buying any books.

"This is an important victory for me as a bookseller and for my customers," said Tom Lowenberg, co-owner of Octavia Books. "This law would have placed an impossible burden on our website by forcing us to 'ID' every person who visited the site before allowing them to browse our books or risk getting a $10,000 fine."

"I'm very relieved by the decision. This law would have had a definite chilling effect on our business, depriving our customers of books that they have a First Amendment right to browse and buy," said Britton Trice, owner of Garden District Book Shop.



Art by Cully Hamner



a definitive history of women and free expression

Women have been making comics since the medium's very beginning, but there's an important story that hasn't yet been told: how women changed free expression in comics. Comic Book Legal Defense Fund will tell that story in *She Changed Comics*, a full-color, 160-page book coming out October 5, 2016 from Image Comics. *She Changed Comics* was a runaway success on Kickstarter, where backers funded the project in less than eight hours and supported several stretch goals, including teaching guides for middle school, high school, and higher education, as well as a nationwide teaching tour.

JACKIE ORMES

Golden Age | Syndicated Cartoonist | *profile by Maren Williams*

Zelda Jackson Ormes, better known as Jackie, was the first Black woman to make a living as a cartoonist. Between 1937 and 1955, her strips were syndicated extensively nationwide in the Black press, featuring Black women front and center in roles and social situations they were never accorded in the mainstream media of the day.

Ormes got her start in journalism while she was still in high school, reporting for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, which had a nationwide distribution. In 1937 Ormes tried her hand at cartooning with her first strip, *Torchy Brown in Dixie to Harlem*. Through the heroine Torchy, a southern transplant to New York who became a performer at the Cotton Club, Ormes was able to address not only racism and prejudice, but also women's careers and other issues she felt strongly about. She later described herself as "antiwar [and] anti-everything-that's-smelly." Although Torchy Brown initially appeared only in the *Pittsburgh Courier*, before long the strip was syndicated in 14 more Black papers across the country.

In 1940 Ormes brought the original Torchy Brown to an end and briefly moved with her husband Earl to his small hometown of Salem, Ohio, but she was unhappy there. They soon moved to Chicago. There, Ormes got a reporting job with the *Chicago Defender*, and by the mid-1940s she had conceived of another comic strip, the single-panel *Candy*. In 1946 she started another single-panel strip, *Patty Jo 'n' Ginger*, which featured the acerbic little girl Patty Jo and her fashion-plate older sister Ginger. Through the voice of Patty Jo, Ormes again commented on issues of the day, such as racism, sexism, the military-industrial complex, and McCarthyism. In 1948 she also licensed a Patty Jo doll, which was the first nationally distributed Black doll and remains a collector's item to this day.

In 1950 a national syndicate persuaded Ormes to bring back Torchy Brown for a new strip, *Torchy in Heartbeats*. Initially, however, the syndicate only wanted her to provide the art to match a male writer's storylines. This did not work out well, as Ormes said she constantly had to remind the writer that the character she created "was no moonstruck crybaby, and that she wouldn't perish between heartbreaks. I have never liked dreamy little women who can't hold their own." Eventually Ormes regained full creative control over the strip, which ran until 1955, when papers like the *Courier* and the *Defender* cut their comics sections to give more space to coverage of the growing Civil Rights Movement. Ormes switched to fine art painting until she had to give that up due to rheumatoid arthritis.

By the time Ormes retired from comics, her husband was managing the historic DuSable Hotel on Chicago's South Side, hosting a veritable who's who of Black performers, artists, and writers visiting the city. Jackie also was heavily involved in local advocacy through the Chicago Urban League and the South Side Community Art Center.

Ormes died in 1985. While her work engaged and inspired confidence in Black women, her own industry remains virtually off limits to them. From 1989 to 2005 there was exactly one nationally syndicated Black woman newspaper cartoonist, *Where I'm Coming From* creator Barbara Brandon-Croft, who credits Ormes as an inspiration. Brandon-Croft ended the strip over a decade ago, and any potential successors have apparently been stifled not only by the familiar combination of racism and sexism, but also by syndicates' heavy reliance on zombie strips.

Further Reading

Jackie Ormes: The First African American Woman Cartoonist by Nancy Goldstein (University of Michigan Press, 2008)

PATTY-JO 'n' GINGER

"It would be interestin' to discover WHICH committee decided it was un-American to be COLORED!"

A look inside *She Changed Comics*: Jackie Ormes is just one of dozens of women who will be featured.

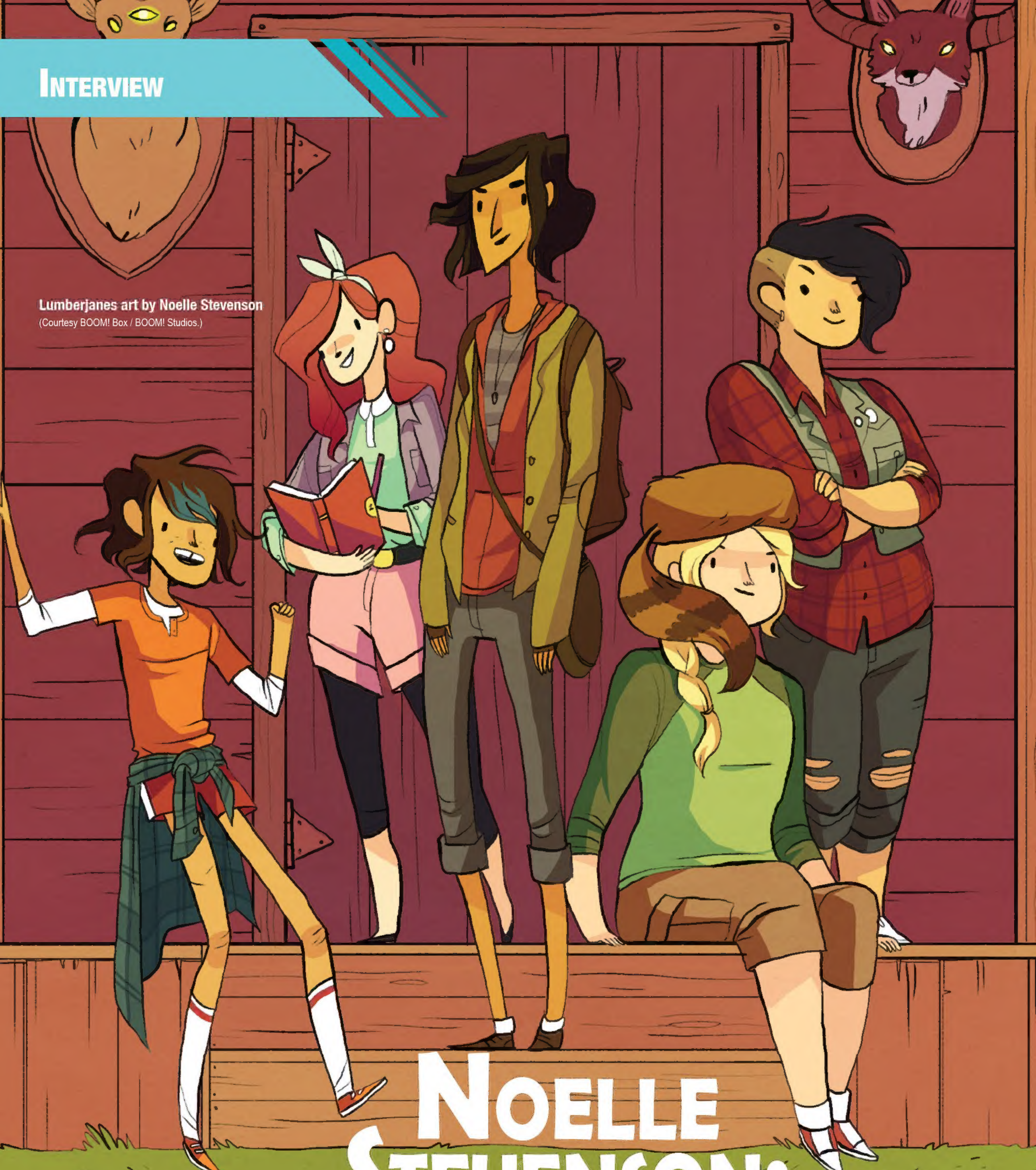
She Changed Comics at a glance:

- ✓ Profiles 60+ women who changed free expression in comics
- ✓ Interviews with some of the most influential women at work today
- ✓ Examines the plights of women who have been arrested or threatened for their work
- ✓ 1,570 backers on Kickstarter
- ✓ Ancillary materials include teaching guides for middle school, high school, and higher education
- ✓ Release supported by nation-wide teaching tour
- ✓ Audiobook

"More women are reading and making comics, and we want to explore the women who laid the groundwork for this transition in *She Changed Comics*," said Betsy Gomez, CBLDF Editorial Director and editor of *She Changed Comics*. "These are women who opened the door, ventured into new creative terrains, and radically changed the face of free expression in the process. *She Changed Comics* will be an invaluable tool in CBLDF's ongoing mission to educate people about the value of comics as art and literature."

"As an education professional and longtime advocate for the contributions women have made to comics, I regard this book as essential," said Katherine Keller, Sequential Tart co-founder and CBLDF Board Member. "*She Changed Comics* has an important place in classrooms and libraries, and belongs in the backpack of any young person discovering their place as a reader or creator in this incredible medium."

"We're thrilled to partner with Image to distribute this book to the widest possible range of readers," said Christina Merkler, CBLDF Board Member and www.DCBService.com partner. "We're immensely grateful to all of the Kickstarter backers who funded the creation of the book and all of the incredible added material we had only dreamed was possible. Image's efforts will allow us to get all of that extraordinary work out to the world in a much bigger way than we could do ourselves. We couldn't be happier about their support!"



Lumberjanes art by Noelle Stevenson
(Courtesy BOOM! Box / BOOM! Studios.)

Noelle Stevenson: Changing Comics to the Max!

In just a few short years, Noelle Stevenson has had a hand in transforming comics for a new generation. From her National Book Award finalist *Nimona*, to her work on Eisner Award-winning *Lumberjanes*, to penning *The Runaways*, Stevenson has infused the industry with charming, relatable characters and expanded comics readership, especially among young women.

interview by Casey Gilly

Stevenson's early work on Tumblr attracted an intensely loyal following, devoted to her hipster takes of franchises including *Lord of the Rings* and *Doctor Who*. Stevenson's stories are infused with playfulness, adventure, and humor, never straying into gender stereotypes. Stevenson joined CBLDF to chat about what keeps her inspired, her passion for unique characters, and hopes for how her legacy will continue to change the landscape of comics.

Noelle, what was your early relationship with comics?

I grew up drawing a lot of comics, but I didn't know what they were at the time. Even before I could write, all I wanted to do was tell stories with my art. I'd dictate stories for my mom to write out for me, and then I'd illustrate them. As soon as I could write, I started making sequential art. Just stick figure sequences with vertical lines denoting "panels." Little stories about characters cleaning their houses, or the guy whose job it was to make traffic lights change color. I had a whole sketchbook that was just filled with the epic tale of an ant who rode roller coasters and the roller coasters would crash and he'd get maimed, over and over. I didn't realize until much later that those were comics.

How have you seen the comics community change since you've been a creator?

I feel like I've been in comics for fifty years but it's been like, three. It's completely different now. Every year has been different from the last. I mean, three years ago we had the Hawkeye Initiative poking fun at the way female heroes were sexualized in comics art, and then last year there was a sexualized comic cover and it became a big deal, but it was a big deal because suddenly that wasn't the norm anymore. A lot has changed, but things tend to come in cycles — just with comics, that cycle is ridiculously fast. It's a lot to keep up with. I think there's a lot more change still to come. I hope there is.

Your early work includes* Broship of the Rings *on Tumblr. What was the climate like for a webcomics creator at that time? How did you deal with the transition to printed comics?

Tumblr was at its peak at the time, and it was pretty easy to get art shared around there! So by the time I went from fanart to an original webcomic, I had a pretty decent audience already. The transition from fanart to webcomics felt very natural, they felt very entwined for me. You have young creators taking the stories they love and making them the way they want to see them. I don't know what the art landscape on Tumblr is like these days, I haven't kept up with it, but webcomics remains the most exciting and promising comics form to me still. I think we're going to see a lot more exciting stuff coming from the webcomics crowd. I half want mainstream comics to pay more attention to them and half want them to be left alone because webcomics is evolving in such interesting and organic ways and I don't think that they even need to be validated by major publishers. I want them to get paid, of course, but there are more options for that these days too.

Fanfiction is an incredibly safe, creative, and welcoming community for women. How does the free expression of fic contribute to the comics community?

I can't say I'm really familiar with fanfiction. I was big into fanart for a bit, but from what I can tell those communities are pretty different. With fanart, though, it was about taking the stories you loved and interpreting them through your own lens and sharing that vision with others. Fan comics helped me realize what it was I gravitated towards in story and character and find my voice in both art and storytelling. I still use jokes I originated in fanart in my writing all the time. I sneaked a lot of them into my *Runaways* run.

What do you say to people who are derogatory toward fanart or fanfic?

Not much, these days. I try to avoid those people. Everything I just described in my last answer is super common throughout the history of storytelling in general, and it only becomes spurned once it becomes strongly associated with women.

You've always made work that was very approachable to readers, regardless of gender. How do you think reading books like yours would have impacted you as a young person?

That's pretty much who I'm making them for! It feels like reaching backwards through time to give myself a pat on the back and say hey, kid, you're okay and there are a lot of other people like you. Practically, I'm hoping to reach those same types of kids today.

The impact of* Lumberjanes *has been so significant, removing perceptions about gender and encouraging a

Noelle Stevenson
(Photo by Leslie Ranne.)

spirit of adventure, camaraderie, and bravery. What have been some of your favorite fan reactions to the book?

I love seeing the little kids get really into it. There were twins who threw a *Lumberjanes*-themed birthday party, and they dressed up as April and Molly, and they sent us photos. That was really special. It's so important to give kids, especially girls, options about who they want to be. Growing up, I feel like the female characters we had access to were a lot more limited, so finding characters like, say, *Harriet the Spy* were mind-blowing for me. It's great to give kids some of those options today.

CBLDF and other freedom to read advocates have noted a disturbing trend: diverse comics are more likely to be censored. Why do you think that is, and how would you respond to these would-be censors?

People seem to be of the mind that kids can't handle something because they aren't familiar with it and therefore it will be a big shock to them and they'll be scarred for life, or something. But really, whose fault is it that they aren't familiar with it? You trust your kid to be able to handle information about the world, and that's what will become normal for them.

What do you see as some of the risks to limiting access to diverse comics for all readers, but especially readers like you, who didn't see an accurate portrayal of themselves in comics?

Right now, kids are growing up with a very narrow idea of who they're supposed to be because that's what's served to them. It's our job to show them that those aren't the only ways to be. Normalize those narratives and let kids empathize with them, and give the ones who need it the most a mirror to see themselves in the story. Say hey, this isn't a weird or bad way to be, this is just another way to exist in the world and it's great — you're great!

What can you tell me about your upcoming projects?

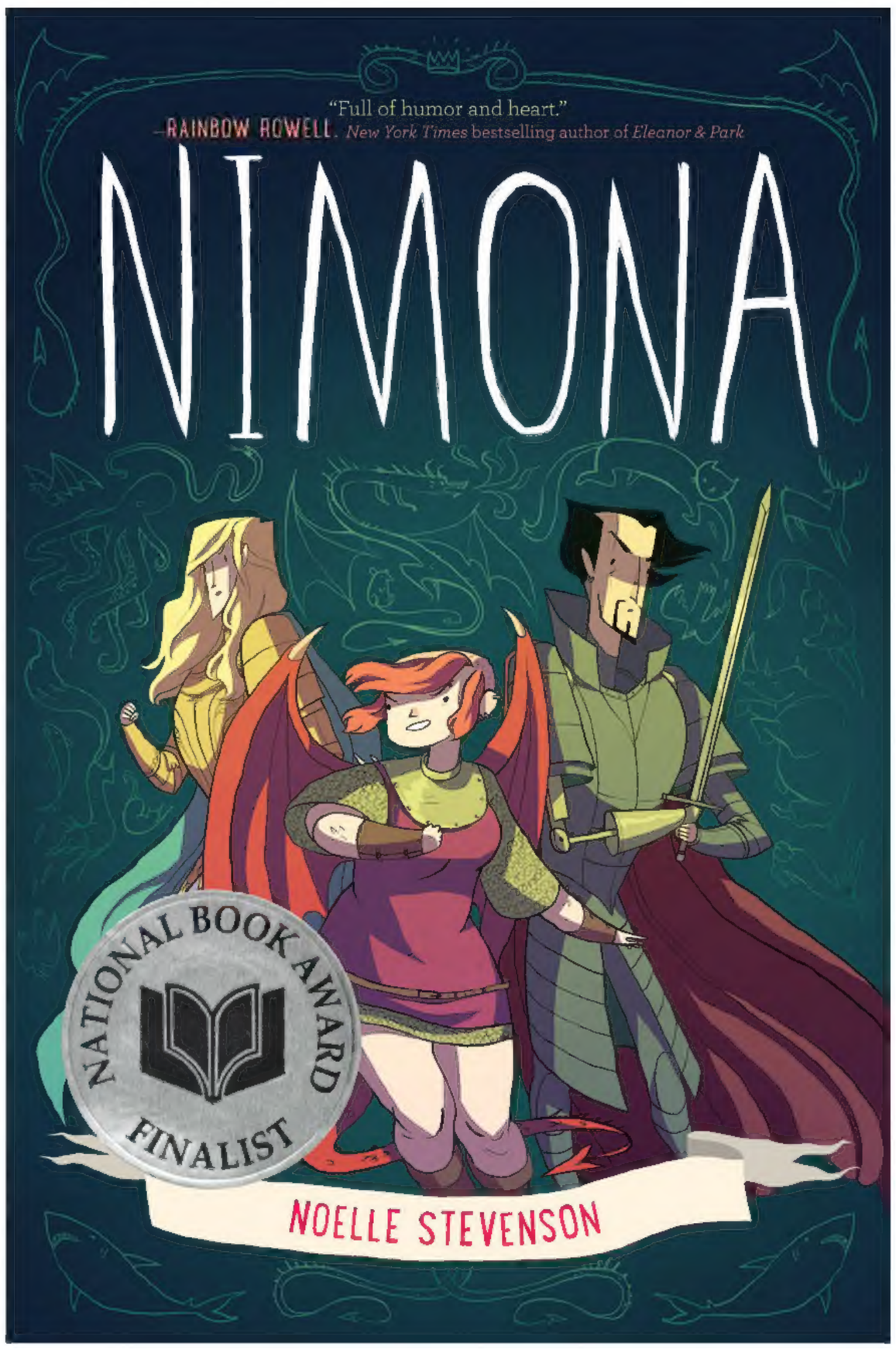
I'm working on a 2-book series for HarperCollins called *4 Wizards*, which I'm co-writing with my friend Todd Casey and drawing. I'm also involved with production on the animated adaption of *Nimona* at Fox, and a couple of other top-secret projects which are going to hopefully be so, so cool.

What advice do you have for aspiring creators who, like you, felt restricted by perceptions of their gender and how they are "allowed" to connect with comics?

Don't wait for permission to create, and don't wait for approval on what you can create. Today more than ever, there are options for you to get your work out there exactly the way you want it without going through the old channels at all. Comics are being reinvented all around us constantly, and we need those new voices and new models more than ever.

How do you think the depiction and perception of gender will continue to change in comics in the future, both with regard to the creators of comics and with regard to the content?

I hope we reach a time where female creators can make comics exactly the way they want to make them, and anyone who can't get on board gets left behind.


"Full of humor and heart."
—RAINBOW ROWELL, New York Times bestselling author of Eleanor & Park
NIMONA
NATIONAL BOOK AWARD FINALIST
NOELLE STEVENSON

Stevenson launched the *Nimona* webcomic in 2012, and the graphic novel collection of the series was a finalist for the National Book Award in 2015. While the series starts off a as a frothy fantasy adventure, it deepens into an emotional exploration of morality. (*Nimona* copyright © 2015 by Noelle Stevenson.)

Cartoonists Freed!

This spring saw the release of two Iranian cartoonists who had been separately arrested for their work and held in Tehran's Evin Prison. Hadi Heidari, who had been re-arrested on a previous charge last November, was released on April 26. Less than a week later, Atena Farghadani was freed after her sentence of 12 years and 9 months was reduced to 18 months, which she had already served.

Some sources linked Heidari's most recent arrest with a cartoon that he posted on Instagram, mourning the victims of the November 13 Paris attack, but it's not clear the two were related. Iran's rulers are not sympathetic to ISIS, and President Hassan Rouhani quickly condemned the attacks. While Iranian hardliners are "wary of any perceived expression of friendly overtures to secular Western countries, which they might have thought the cartoon conveyed," Heidari was more likely arrested in retaliation for his domestic reform advocacy.

Heidari first came to the government's attention in 2009, when he was involved with the Green Movement that arose after the disputed re-election of then-President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. He was arrested for "assembly and collusion against national security" and again in 2010 for "propaganda against the state." He was not convicted on either count.

In 2012, though, a national furor arose in response to his cartoon "The Blindfolded Men." Heidari's opponents say the men are soldiers in the Iran-Iraq War of the 1980s and that the cartoon implies the military was misled. Heidari denies that they represent soldiers, pointing out they're not wearing military uniforms. Regardless, he was called into court, the manager of *Shargh Newspaper*, which published the cartoon, was arrested, and the newspaper itself was temporarily banned.

Heidari announced his release on Instagram:

> *Hello to freedom! By the grace of God, I was released from Evin Prison tonight after serving time. Thank you all for the kindness. I am extremely grateful to all my friends who supported me and my family during this time. Thank you. I hope I am worthy of your kindness.*

Hadi Heidari celebrates his release from prison with his daughter. (Photo via Twitter)

Atena Farghadani served 18 months prison before her May 3 release. (Photo via CRNI)

Upon her exit from Evin Prison on May 3, Farghadani was greeted by family and supporters bearing flowers. Cartoonists Rights Network International spoke to her directly, and she "expressed her utmost appreciation for [CRNI] and all organizations, cartoonists and activists who have supported her throughout her incarceration and given a voice to her and her cause."

Farghadani was first arrested in August 2014 for a cartoon mocking members of Parliament as they debated a bill to ban voluntary sterilization procedures. When Farghadani was released on bail, she uploaded a video to YouTube detailing abuses she suffered in prison, including beatings, strip searches, and non-stop interrogations. She was rearrested in January 2015 and sentenced after a perfunctory jury-less trial.

During her appeal, Farghadani was additionally charged with "non-adultery illegitimate relations" for shaking her lawyer Mohammad Moghimi's hand. Contact between unrelated members of the opposite sex is technically illegal in Iran, but rarely prosecuted. Moghimi was also charged. Both were acquitted in January 2016, but Farghadani was involuntarily subjected to virginity and pregnancy tests.

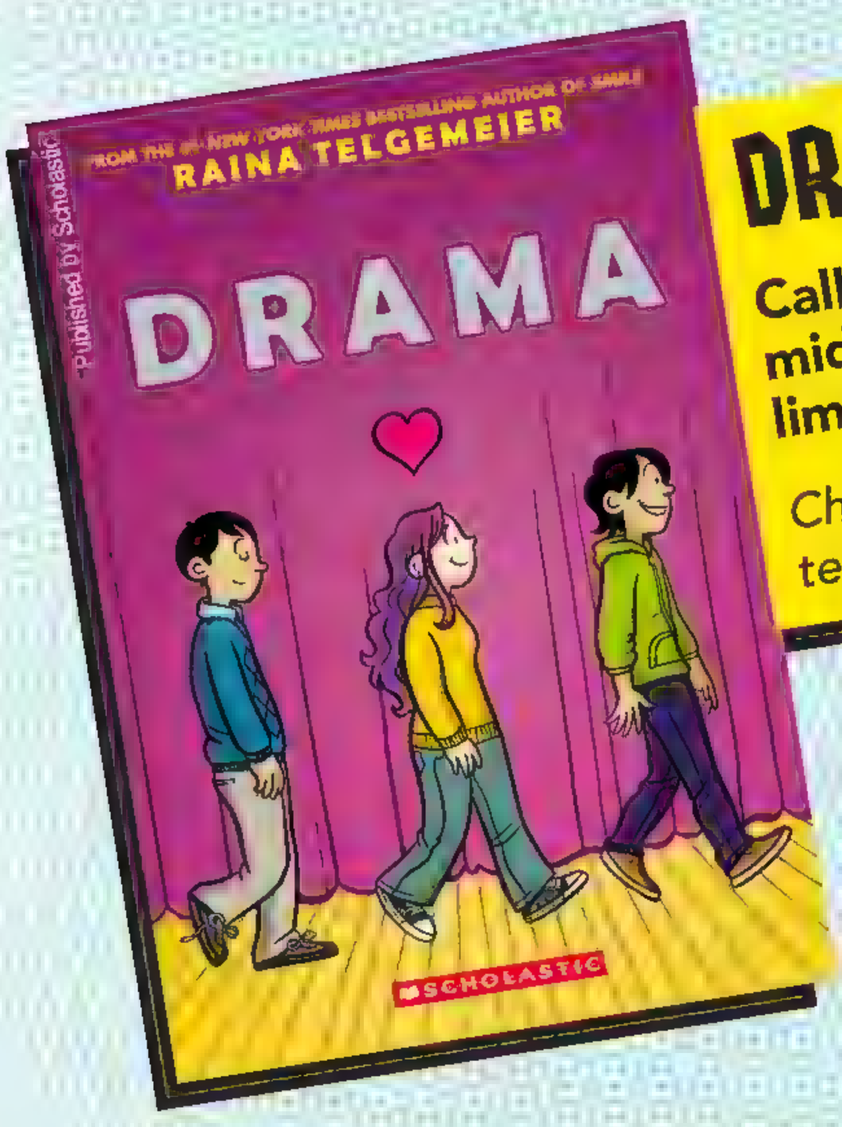
Last year, Farghadani was honored with the 2015 Courage in Editorial Cartooning Award from CRNI. After her release, she told CRNI that "although she's happy to be free, she is also concerned about all of the unknown prisoners who have no supporters." While many other Iranian cartoonists under duress have fled the country, Farghadani said that her hope is "to stay in Iran and continue working as an artist."

While the release of the two cartoonists is certainly welcome news, it does not necessarily signal a universally improved climate for freedom of expression in Iran. Rouhani has voiced support for increased media freedoms, but he does not hold much sway over the court system. The same day Heidari was released, in fact, four journalists were convicted of spreading propaganda (specifically, "paving the way for U.S. infiltration of the country") and sentenced to between 5 and 10 years in prison.

Maren Williams

10 BANNED COMICS FOR SUMMER READING!

Summer is here, so it's time to stock up on comics! Visit your local comic book shop to get these amazing banned and challenged titles!



DRAMA

Callie loves theater, but middle school drama isn't limited to school musicals!

Challenged for: sexual content, LGBTQ themes

FUN HOME

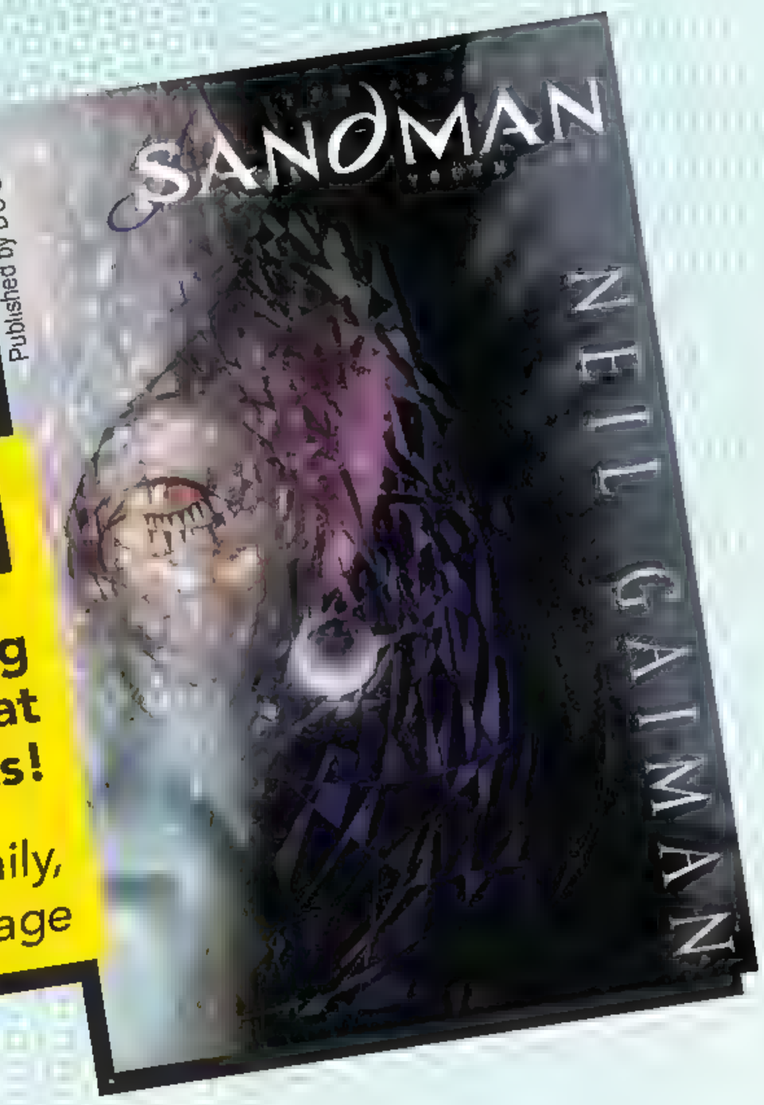
A young woman examines her relationship with her father!

Challenged for: sexual content, LGBTQ themes

SAGA

The sweeping tale of a family fighting to find their place in the galaxy!

Challenged for: sexual content, anti-family, nudity, offensive language



SANDMAN

The groundbreaking fantasy series that redefined comics!

Challenged for: anti-family, nudity, offensive language

Find a CBLDF retail member near you:
http://tinyurl.com/hdp6gtp

BONE

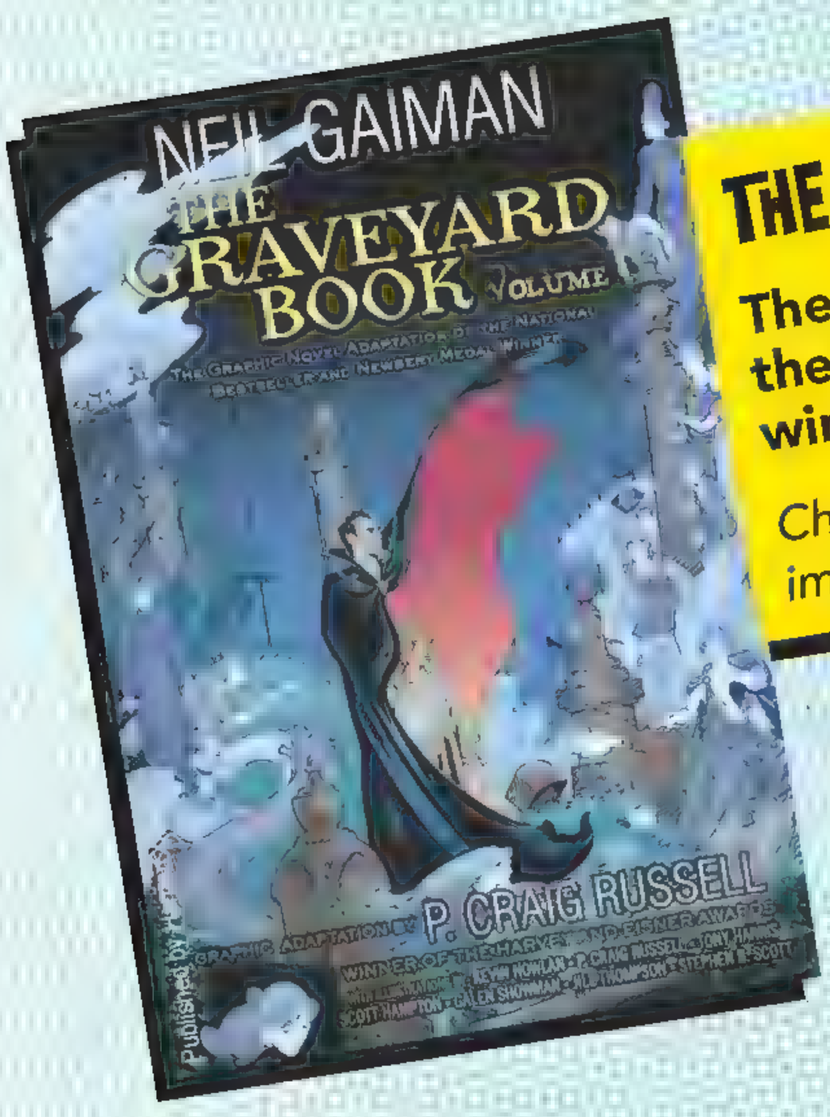
This all-ages fantasy features action, comedy, and an epic hero's quest!

Challenged for: promotion of smoking and drinking, racism

DRAGON BALL

Adventure, martial arts, and dragons, all in one international bestseller!

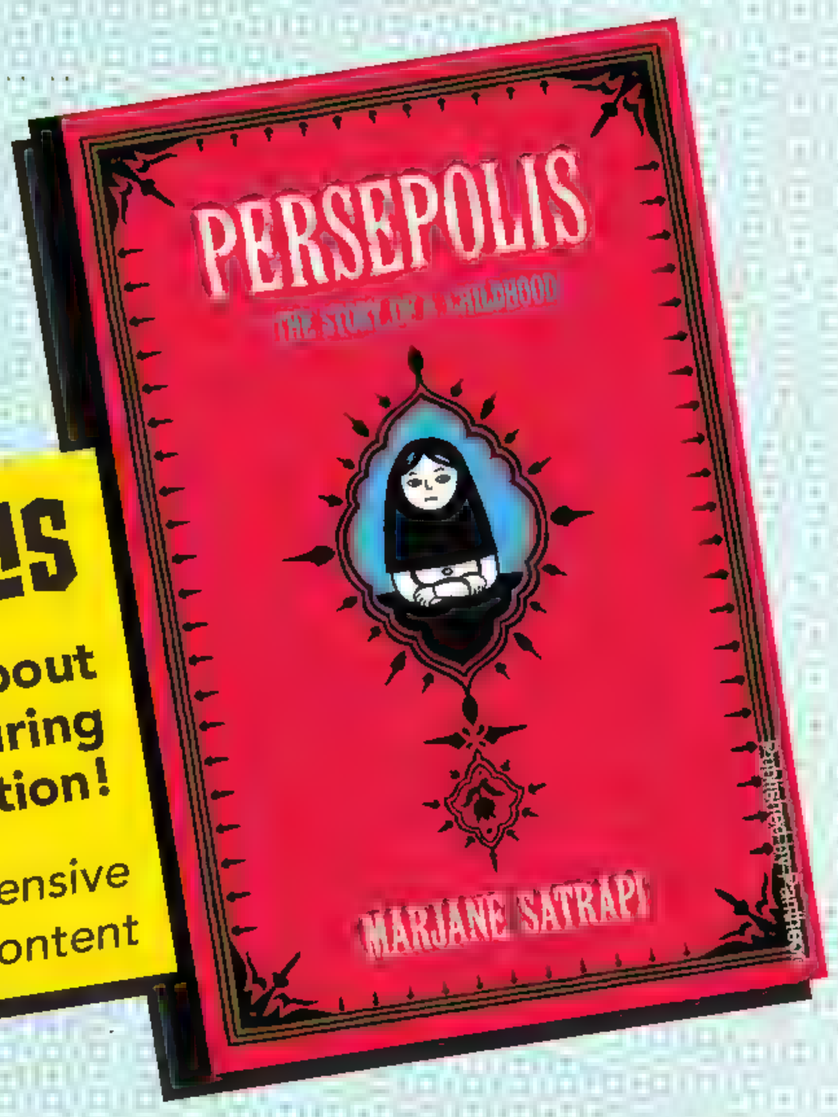
Challenged for: violent content, nudity



THE GRAVEYARD BOOK

The comic adaptation of the Newbery Medal-winning novel!

Challenged for: violent imagery



PERSEPOLIS

Acclaimed memoir about coming of age during Iran's Islamic Revolution!

Challenged for: offensive language, violent content

THIS ONE SUMMER

The first graphic novel shortlisted for the Caldecott medal!

Challenged for: sexual content, unsuited to age group

WATCHMEN

A postmodern deconstruction of comics and superhero tropes

Challenged for: unsuited to age group

For more on why these comics and more were challenged, visit http://tinyurl.com/oa47tvw

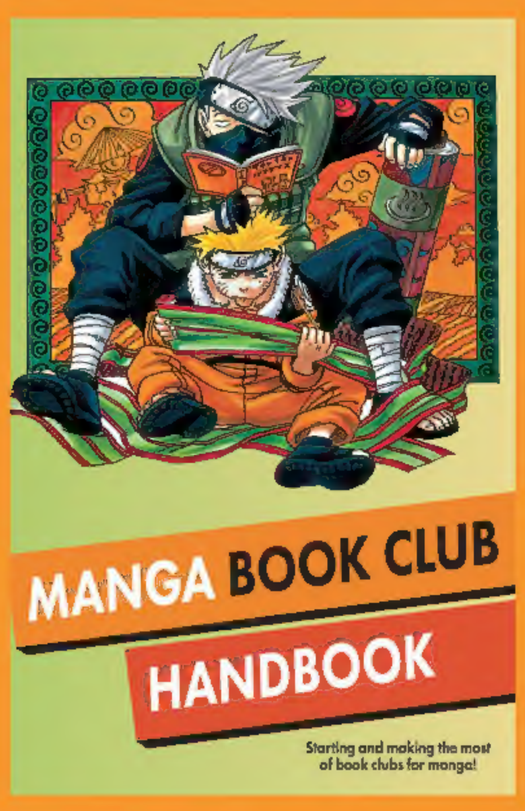
COMING SOON

CBLDF Presents: Liberty TP

Art & story: Various
Cover: Ben Templesmith

Celebrate creative freedom with the industry's top talents in this deluxe edition collecting *Liberty Annual* 2008–2012. *Liberty* includes rare work from Robert Kirkman, Neil Gaiman, Jim Lee, Ed Brubaker, and dozens more! Available August 3, 2016! ($15.99 digital, $19.99 print; Diamond order code: MAY160672)

NOW AVAILABLE



Manga Book Club Handbook

Made in partnership with VIZ Media, this handbook will give you all the tools — tips, reading suggestions, and more — you need to start a book club for manga in your community! ($3 donation or $10 donation for bundle of 5; http://tinyurl.com/zglot8f)

Help the CBLDF... Defend Comics FCBD 2016 Edition

Art & Story: Various
Cover: Craig Thompson

An all-star, all-ages spectacular featuring the greatest in kid's comics! You'll find something readers from 2 to 92 will like, including Andy Runton (*Owly*), James Kochalka (*Johnny Boo*), Lucy Knisley (*Relish*), John Patrick Green (*Hippopotamister*), Sara Richard (*My Little Pony*), Vivek Tiwary (*The Fifth Beatle*), and more! Now available in large bundles, perfect for Banned Books Week, library and school events, or other community outreach projects! ($75 donation for a bundle of 280, http://tinyurl.com/z7bsjlr)

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 24–27, 2016: American Library Association Annual Conference and Exhibition

- Orange County Convention Center, Orlando, Florida
- Graphic Novel/Gaming Pavilion
- http://2016.alaannual.org

July 20–24, 2016: Comic-Con International

- San Diego Convention Center, San Diego, California
- Booth #1918
- www.comic-con.org/cci

Schedule subject to change. Visit cbldf.org for updates.

PREMIUMS SPOTLIGHT

Comic-Con International 2016 kicks off July 21, with Preview Night launching CBLDF's biggest comics show of the year at 6:00 p.m. on July 20. If you're there, come by CBLDF booth #1918 to get the **Comic-Con exclusive Comics Code embroidered patch and pin!** It's been five years since the end of the Code, and what better way to celebrate than sporting these limited edition CBLDF exclusives?!

We'll have more exclusives at the show, so be sure to visit http://cbldf.org to get the latest info!

JOIN THE FIGHT!

Joining the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund puts you on the front lines of the fight against censorship! When you join CBLDF, we'll thank you with the best incentives and benefits in the free speech community, starting off with a stunning membership card by cartoonist Craig Thompson! We have membership plans for donors in every budget, and all of them are tax-deductible:

- ✓ **Member ($100):** CBLDF membership card, CBLDF button set, CBLDF sticker set, CBLDF pocket sketchbook, CBLDF member patch, and EXCLUSIVE member-only t-shirt featuring Craig Thompson's gorgeous art!
- ✓ **Associate Member ($30):** CBLDF membership card
- ✓ **Supporter Member ($50):** CBLDF membership card, CBLDF button set, CBLDF sticker set, CBLDF pocket sketchbook, CBLDF member patch!
- ✓ **Defender Member ($250):** All of the above, plus the CBLDF water bottle and *CBLDF Liberty Annual* Volume 1!
- ✓ **Protector Member ($500):** All of the above, plus an exclusive embossed executive Moleskine journal!
- ✓ **Champion Member ($1,000):** All of the above, plus recognition in *CBLDF Liberty Annual* 2016 and the CBLDF executive messenger bag!
- ✓ **Guardian Member ($2,500):** All of the above, plus special recognition in select CBLDF publications throughout 2016!

Art by Craig Thompson

Use the signup form on the back cover of this magazine or visit http://cbldf.myshopify.com/collections/memberships to join today!

RADIO FREE COMIX!

CBLDF is now part of the audio-sphere! A mix of interviews, discussions about censorship, convention panel recordings, and archival materials, the CBLDF Podcast is a monthly event, from our keyboards to your ears. Recent guests include *Fight Club* author **Chuck Palahniuk** and *Black Panther* artist **Brian Stelfreeze!** The CBLDF Podcast is made possible in part by a donation from the Gaiman Foundation and member support.

Listen at http://cbldf.org/podcast

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1-800-99-CBLDF

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SON OF ULTRON

"THIS FAN... THIS MONSTER!"